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Summary record of the 1604th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 July 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Eighth periodic report of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/8; CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8 and CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cyprus took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus), introducing her country's eighth periodic report (CEDAW/C/CYP/8), said that, despite the impact of the global economic crisis, Cyprus had made considerable progress during the reporting period in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. A number of national action plans, policies and strategies had been implemented, several new laws tackling gender inequality had been enacted and various independent equality bodies had been established or strengthened. The country's first national action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security was currently being finalized by the National Machinery for Women's Rights, which was also involved in family law reform and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which Cyprus had ratified in 2017.

3. The adoption of the Strategic Action Plan on Gender Equality for the period 2014–2017 had been a significant achievement. Developed in cooperation with the Commissioner for Gender Equality, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women's organizations, the Plan had been designed to promote the implementation of the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7) and addressed six priority areas, including the equal representation of women and men in decision-making posts, violence against women and the elimination of gender stereotypes. A 2017 evaluation of the Plan had revealed major progress in women's employment, economic empowerment and other areas, but little change in women's political participation and portrayal in the media.

4. Cyprus was committed to addressing the situation of vulnerable groups of women, including asylum seekers, single mothers and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. For example, legislation had been introduced in 2015 that enabled couples to enter into civil partnerships, irrespective of gender; granted unmarried partners the same rights as married couples; and provided single-parent families, which were often headed by women, with additional financial support. A bill to establish a clear, simplified procedure for correcting the registered sex of transgender individuals, thus promoting their right to self-determination, was also in the pipeline. For asylum seekers, a mechanism had been set up to facilitate the early identification of women's specific needs, and women officers and interpreters had been trained to examine applications from women asylum seekers.

5. In the area of employment, several initiatives had been introduced to aid women's integration into the labour market, foster a balance between family and professional life and close the gender pay gap. Indeed, the pay gap had decreased significantly, from around 17 per cent in 2010 to just under 14 per cent in 2016, and the downtrend was expected to continue. The Criminal Code had been amended in March 2018 to safeguard the right of nursing mothers to breastfeed in public places, and new legislation had been adopted that upheld fathers' right to two weeks' paid paternity leave.

6. To prevent and combat violence against women, the authorities had carried out awareness-raising campaigns and had increased support for victims, while working to encourage case reporting and improve data collection. To give full effect to the Istanbul Convention, a bill criminalizing harassment and stalking had been submitted to parliament, and a second bill outlawing all forms of violence against women was being drafted. The Government had provided funding to support a 24-hour NGO-run helpline for victims of domestic and gender-based violence and there were plans to establish two shelters and a multidisciplinary victim support centre. In addition, the national police had developed training programmes, manuals and guidelines to increase the sensitivity, awareness and professionalism of officers who handled cases of domestic violence.

7. Cyprus had placed an emphasis on combating trafficking in persons, with the result that the country had been upgraded to Tier 1 in the United States Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2018. In particular, the Government had enacted relevant new legislation, implemented related national action plans, increased awareness-raising activities and strengthened the police unit responsible for combating human trafficking. As a consequence, several cases of trafficking had been successfully prosecuted.

8. Efforts had been made to increase women's participation in public and political life, including through information campaigns, liaison with political parties and media organizations, and the exchange of good practices at conferences and seminars. However, although women occupied a number of high-level posts, including as the Minister for Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, women remained seriously underrepresented in decision-making and business leadership roles as well as in elected office. As a result, the use of temporary special measures, such as quotas on candidate lists, was being considered.

9. Key developments in the area of health had included the decriminalization of abortion, permitting women to access terminations up to the twelfth week of pregnancy; the implementation of a number of plans and programmes to ensure women's access to health; and the introduction of a national plan aimed at minimizing the effects of the economic crisis on the provision of public health care, in particular for vulnerable groups.

10. Family law reforms were also under way, with a number of bills being tabled to modernize the legislation and harmonize it with international and European human rights conventions. The new laws included measures to protect the family home, by preventing one spouse from disposing of it without the other's consent, and to facilitate access to information on spousal property for the purpose of calculating alimony. Research on the economic consequences of divorce had been undertaken in that connection, and the findings had been used to shape the draft National Action Plan on Gender Equality for the period 2018–2021, which placed an emphasis on protecting vulnerable groups of women.

11. Notwithstanding the significant positive developments that had occurred, traditional perceptions of gender roles and gender stereotypes continued to restrict the achievement of de facto equality between women and men. Cyprus was determined to intensify its efforts to eliminate those attitudes and to address the multiple forms of discrimination faced by vulnerable groups of women. In view of the global economic crisis, the country's greatest challenge was to ensure the resources necessary to support the national machinery and further develop gender-equality programmes. The Government recognized, however, that gender equality was not an economic burden; it was a prerequisite for social development and growth.

Articles 1 to 6

12. **Ms. Ameline** said that, since around a third of the country was not under the Government's control, owing to the island's continued partition, she wished to know whether any impact assessment of the situation of Cypriot women living in occupied areas had been conducted and whether any progress had been made towards resolving the ongoing conflict. She noted that the Supreme Court had ruled the use of certain quotas, or temporary special measures, for the advancement of women to be unconstitutional, and that the State party lacked comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, which would help in tackling multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Further information on those points would therefore be welcome. She wondered whether there were plans to strengthen the role and increase the resources of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights in order to ensure that the institution had the power to investigate and refer cases of discrimination. She would also like to know whether the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women had been involved in drafting the periodic report and whether it would participate in the implementation of the Committee's forthcoming concluding observations. In that connection, she would be interested to hear what measures would be taken to raise awareness of the Committee's recommendations among civil society. Lastly, she asked what action had been taken to combat corruption and tax evasion; what steps had been taken towards achieving the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those concerning women's rights; what

mechanisms were in place to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees; and whether the European Union was providing enough support to deal with the influx of asylum seekers to the island.

13. **Ms. Rana** asked what was being done to promote equality between men and women by enabling women's full and meaningful participation at decision-making levels of the formal peace process; to ensure that a gender-sensitive approach was adopted in all negotiations and incorporated in all settlement agreements; and to raise awareness of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related issues. She would like to know the current status of the first national action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), covering the period 2018–2021; the time frame for its adoption and implementation, given that it was already mid-2018; the resources that would be made available to ensure its effective implementation; the body that would be responsible for implementation; the role that women's groups would play; the number of women involved in the peace process; and the positions they held. The use of rape as a weapon of war and the lack of cooperation between police and other security forces were matters of particular concern that impeded the enjoyment of human rights, especially in the north of the country. She would therefore like information on efforts to ensure that women's rights were upheld throughout the island and that any protection gaps were minimized.

14. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that, because the Government was unable to exercise effective control over the northern part of the island, it did not have access to accurate information about the human rights situation in the occupied areas and was not in a position to take remedial action. However, all documented Cypriot citizens who came from the north of the island were able to exercise their rights on an equal footing with other citizens in the south.

15. International instruments, including the Convention, were incorporated into and took precedence over national law. The provisions of the Convention were thus both invoked and upheld by the courts, so ensuring protection for women. The Constitution expressly prohibited direct and indirect discrimination and listed multiple prohibited grounds, in line with the Convention. As a Member State of the European Union, Cyprus was also bound to harmonize its laws with European Union instruments, and specific provisions relating to discrimination against women had therefore been transposed into national law.

16. The Government acknowledged that the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights, as the national human rights institution, should be brought fully into line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) and the institution was expected to make the changes necessary to achieve "A" status accreditation. Although the economic crisis had brought funding cuts across all sectors, the Commissioner had not been adversely affected. However, there was no consensus as to the possibility of awarding it additional resources.

17. The Committee's 2013 concluding observations had been submitted to parliament, had been translated into Greek, had been disseminated among all government agencies and civil society organizations, and had served as input for the drafting of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2018–2021. Upon finalization of the draft, the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women had met with representatives of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order to consider the Plan's content and verify that it would serve to promote implementation of the concluding observations. The same procedure would be followed in the preparation of future action plans, thereby guaranteeing the implementation of future recommendations from the Committee.

18. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that the national action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which had been drafted by the Commissioner for Gender Equality and an independent expert, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was subject to ongoing consultation with women's groups and other civil society organizations, led by the National Machinery for Women's Rights. It would be submitted to parliament once those consultations were concluded and should be adopted by the end of August 2018. Funding to support peacebuilding efforts and implementation of the national action plan had already been allocated to women's organizations and other relevant bodies. All other plan-related activities would likewise be covered by Government resources.

19. **Ms. Voskaridou** (Cyprus) said that the Aliens and Immigration Unit reviewed asylum applications to identify special needs and vulnerable persons and took a gender-sensitive approach to asylum decisions. Training on how to identify asylum seekers and refugees who were victims of torture and trafficking had been organized for officers of the Asylum Service.

20. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that the President of the Republic had referred the bill setting out quotas for the participation of women on the boards of semi-government organizations to the Supreme Court on grounds of unconstitutionality. The Supreme Court had ruled that the bill was unconstitutional as it violated the principle of equality. Alternative measures were therefore being pursued, such as awareness-raising campaigns, the creation of a database on the numbers of women in positions of responsibility, and research into temporary special measures.

21. **Ms. Ameline** said that the lack of resources allocated for the reception and follow-up of women refugees was a matter of concern. She hoped that the State party could count on the support of the European Union in dealing with the influx of migrants. The Government of Cyprus should conduct impact assessments and monitor the situation closely in order to ensure effective implementation of the law.

22. **Ms. Manalo** asked whether the State party was a signatory to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, which would ensure the protection of refugees.

23. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that the State party had signed the aforementioned Convention and concerns about its impact were currently being discussed in parliament. It was hoped that the Convention would be ratified by the end of 2018.

24. **Mr. Kasoulides** (Cyprus) said that the last round of negotiations relating to the peace process in Cyprus had been suspended, but that talks should resume shortly. Because women were underrepresented in the process, one of a number of expert committees set up had been tasked specifically with addressing gender equality and ensuring that women contributed to the process.

25. **Ms. Song** asked whether any assessment of the impact of the Commissioner for Gender Equality's work had been conducted, and, if so, what conclusions had been drawn. She wondered whether the National Machinery for Women's Rights had been allocated additional resources — and particularly human resources — as a result of the Commissioner's appointment, given the additional duties that had been assumed by the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. Lastly, noting that, in order to ensure that the Machinery had the requisite authority, it was essential for all stakeholders to be engaged in discussions relating to women's rights and equality, she asked which government bodies and other stakeholders, in addition to major women's groups, had contributed to the restructure of the National Machinery for Women's Rights in 2013 and 2014.

26. **Ms. Rana** asked whether new measures for women, such as the Scheme for the Enhancement of Women's Entrepreneurship, had improved the social inclusion of vulnerable groups of women. She asked why article 4 of the Convention had not been invoked against the Supreme Court's decision to reject the bill on quotas for women in semi-government organizations, in view of the persistent gender imbalances in almost all fields and the fact that the State party was under a legal obligation to protect women and prevent discrimination against them, if necessary, using temporary special measures pursuant to article 4 and the Committee's general recommendation No. 27. Accordingly, she wished to know whether the State party would be reviewing the Supreme Court's decision and was nonetheless considering using temporary special measures and affirmative action as part of a strategy for the achievement of substantive and de facto gender equality. In that context, she would like to know what efforts had been made to familiarize relevant officials with the concept of temporary special measures and their use in all areas in which women were disadvantaged or underrepresented, and what results those efforts had yielded

27. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that the Supreme Court's decision was a setback but that judicial opinions evolved over time. Although no bills opposing the decision were

likely to be drawn up in the near future, the Government was committed to finding a solution.

28. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that the Government had made sufficient financial, material and human resources available to the Commissioner for Gender Equality and had taken a series of measures to strengthen the National Machinery for Women's Rights. A coordinating body responsible for harmonizing the work of the various national gender equality entities would also be established in the near future.

29. **Mr. Bergby** asked whether, following the Supreme Court's ruling, the Government had considered amending the Constitution to allow for the introduction of special temporary measures.

30. **Ms. Song** asked what challenges had arisen in the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Gender Equality 2014–2017. She wondered whether the new action plan for 2018–2021 would be given the same name so as to maintain the momentum gained under the previous instrument.

31. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that, despite strong political will, amendments to the Constitution to allow for the introduction of special temporary measures were not foreseeable in the near future. Alternative efforts would, however, be undertaken to promote women's participation and representation in public and political life.

32. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that significant progress had been made in promoting the employment and economic empowerment of women and preventing gender-based violence under the Strategic Action Plan for Gender Equality 2014–2017. The new National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2018–2021 would focus on areas requiring further improvement, such as the political representation and participation of women and negative gender stereotypes in the media.

33. **Ms. Gabr** asked what human, financial and material resources would be provided to the planned coordinating body for gender equality issues. Clarification as to whether the body would tackle negative gender stereotypes in the media and whether it would cooperate closely with civil society organizations would be welcome.

34. In the light of the State party's recent ratification of the Istanbul Convention, it would be interesting to learn when the Government intended to incorporate the Convention's provisions into domestic legislation; whether it had made the appropriate financial and human resources available for the Convention's implementation, including for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism; and what specific forms of violence had been included in the bill to define violence against women as an offence.

35. She wondered whether steps had been taken to enhance the protection of women, for example, by increasing access to specialized services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and expanding the number and geographical coverage of shelters staffed with adequate and appropriately trained legal, social, psychological and other medical personnel. Further information on the training on national legislation preventing and combating violence against women that had been provided to police officers and social and health workers, if any, would also be useful in that context. Noting the reported difficulties experienced by victims of gender-based violence in seeking free legal aid, she asked what action had been taken to uphold women's access to justice and strengthen investigations into and the penalties imposed for those types of offences.

36. **Ms. Bethel** asked what specific challenges had arisen in enforcing the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking of Human Beings and Protection of Victims Law of 2014 and implementing the 2016–2018 National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings. It would be useful to learn more about the role of the bicommunal committees responsible for dealing with the practical issues arising from the occupation in combating trafficking. Given that Cyprus remained a source and destination country for trafficking in women, she wished to know what steps had been taken to guarantee the effective functioning of the Multidisciplinary Coordinating Group for Combating Human Trafficking and ensure that NGOs could contribute to its referral and victim protection functions. She also wondered what action had been taken to address the role of private employment agencies and their involvement in trafficking networks. Further information on the impact

of trafficking awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government agencies, educational establishments and the general public would be welcome. It would be particularly helpful to know what specific measures had been put in place and what institutions were responsible for identifying victims of trafficking and collecting relevant disaggregated data.

37. Regarding victim protection measures, she wished to know under which circumstances victims of trafficking could remain in shelters longer than the statutory four-week period. Detailed information regarding living conditions in the shelters and the protection afforded against further psychological, physical and sexual abuse in such facilities would be useful in that context. She wondered whether the Government would adopt additional measures to support victims, including by streamlining financial assistance processes, granting residence permits and the right to work, and paying travel and accommodation expenses for victims required to testify in court. It would be particularly interesting to learn whether specific protection measures had been put in place to prevent trafficked women being forced or coerced into surrogacy.

38. Concerning the investigation and prosecution of trafficking offences, she asked what efforts had been made to pursue investigations into possible labour trafficking cases among domestic or agricultural workers, and to improve the training offered to labour inspectors and other employment professionals to help them to identify trafficking victims. She also wished to know what steps had been taken to address the reportedly long delays in bringing cases of trafficking in persons before the courts and to prevent key witnesses from leaving the country before the criminal justice process had been concluded.

39. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that the multidimensional nature of combating negative gender stereotypes required the active engagement of all stakeholders. Changing societal and cultural attitudes would take time and would require the concerted efforts of the Government, the media and schools to raise awareness of gender equality and women's rights.

40. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that sufficient financial, material and human resources would be made available to the planned coordinating body for gender equality entities. The Government had drafted two bills to establish an independent board tasked with selecting and monitoring the training curricula for judges and lawyers, which would include specific awareness-raising training on promoting women's rights and combating gender stereotypes. The draft National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2018–2021 would also provide for awareness-raising training on gender equality issues for judges, lawyers, and social and health workers. Legal aid had been made available to all persons unable to afford legal representation, irrespective of nationality, ethnicity or gender.

41. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Body was responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of all forms of gender discrimination. Since 2011, it had provided support and assistance to 130 women and 22 men. Several cases had been successfully brought before the courts and the victims had been awarded compensation.

42. **Ms.** Natalia **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that efforts were under way to establish additional shelters for vulnerable women and ensure an equal geographical distribution of appropriate support services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. All staff working in the shelters had the appropriate professional qualifications and had received specialist training in supporting victims of domestic and sexual violence. The Government had increased its funding to NGOs tasked with running the shelters and had signed a cooperation agreement in December 2017 with all civil society organizations working in the field of gender-based violence, with a view to strengthening the services and support available to victims.

43. Private employment agencies were subject to strict regulations and were required to abide by national legislation governing private agency work. Owners of private employment agencies were required to attend specific anti-trafficking training courses on an annual basis and received regular information leaflets setting out the national operating guidelines for private employment companies. The Department of Labour also conducted regular, unannounced inspections of premises belonging to private employment agencies. In 2017, it had inspected 116 out of 153 agencies and had revoked the licences of 10

companies operating in violation of the law. Four cases had been referred to the police for investigation and administrative fines had been imposed on several other agencies.

44. Victims of trafficking were housed in shelters for a maximum of four weeks. Under certain circumstances, accommodation could be extended by increments of two weeks. The Government worked closely with NGOs to guarantee that victims of trafficking had access to the relevant housing, education, and health services once the four-week period had ended. Social workers informed victims of their rights and ensured they received the appropriate psychological and medical care. Victims of trafficking were also eligible for financial support and received assistance from the national employment services to find suitable employment, where appropriate.

45. **Mr. Veis** (Cyprus) said that combating violence against women remained a high priority for the police services. Police officers at all grades attended regular multicultural sensitivity courses and training sessions dedicated to identifying and supporting victims of sexual and gender-based violence. A new risk assessment protocol for cases involving domestic violence and specialist anti-trafficking toolkits had also recently been introduced.

46. Victims of gender-based violence and trafficking had access to a number of different protection services and were systematically informed of their rights, including through information documents available in several different languages. A specialist unit to investigate cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation had also been established in 2017. Access to government-funded shelters had been restricted to a four-week period in order to prevent the institutionalization of victims. Vulnerable persons requiring additional support had the right to request an extension to their stay.

47. **Ms. Kyprianou** (Cyprus) said that the Ministry of Education had put in place teaching programmes to ensure that, from an early age, children received information on preventing stereotypes and discrimination and issues of sexuality and reproductive rights. The Ministry had established an inter-departmental committee to coordinate all gender equality issues and had developed an action plan for 2018–2020 that included many training courses for teachers and career counsellors as well as for parents. A new health education curriculum had been developed, based on the World Health Organization guidelines. The Ministry of Education's website contained numerous toolkits to help combat racism, homophobia, transphobia, bullying, discrimination, gender stereotypes and violence against women, as well as material on issues such as family planning and human rights. The Ministry had also developed an anti-racism policy, which provided schools and teachers with a detailed framework for preventing racist incidents and eliminating bullying and discrimination based on any form of diversity in schools. The National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography provided for mandatory training for all teaching personnel responsible for sexual education at all levels. In 2018, the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation had conducted a study into the most effective ways in which teachers could provide sex education.

48. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that the bill to criminalize all forms of violence against women, which would bring the provisions of the Istanbul Convention into Cypriot law, was currently before parliament. The bill established a comprehensive framework for combating gender-based violence that encompassed aggravating circumstances and the corresponding increased penalties, immediate and effective prevention, victim protection measures and international cooperation in the fight against such crime. A second bill, which had been before parliament since November 2017 but had not yet been examined in full, would, once adopted, criminalize stalking and harassment, authorize courts to issue protection orders both for victims and persons in the victims' environment, and entitle victims to rehabilitation and compensation.

49. **Ms Bethel** asked whether the evaluation and assessment mechanisms built into the various national action plans had been effective; how effective the Multidisciplinary Coordinating Group for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was proving to be; whether trafficked women were being used in the surrogacy industry; and whether any of the violations committed by private employment agencies had been related to trafficking. She would also like information about efforts to address the court backlogs that were delaying prosecution efforts.

50. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said that she would appreciate the delegation's comments on reports that migrant women victims of domestic violence had been refused legal aid and access to the family courts on the grounds that they did not have a residence permit, or that their temporary residence permit was established in the name of their husband and thus dependent on his endorsement.

51. **Ms. Gabr** asked what forms of violence were addressed under the draft family law currently in preparation. She would like assurances that the planned coordinating body for gender equality issues would have a clear mandate, would include all stakeholders and would be properly staffed and funded. Noting that migrants generally brought with them their own traditions and occasionally harmful practices, she inquired how the State party was dealing with such issues.

52. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that the new coordinating body would be provided with the necessary human and financial resources and that, in implementation of the new National Action Plan for Gender Equality, a study would be carried out to carefully define its competencies and mandate.

53. **Ms.** Natalia **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that the violations committed by the private employment agencies mentioned previously were related not to trafficking but to providing fraudulent information.

54. **Mr. Veis** (Cyprus) said that some of the convictions obtained in trafficking cases heard before the Cypriot courts had concerned the specific crime of trafficking for the sexual exploitation of women. A specialized police unit for trafficking issues conducted checks among high-risk or vulnerable groups with a view to identifying criminal activity and any infringements of anti-trafficking legislation. Where there was doubt, potential victims were treated as victims of trafficking until the investigation proved otherwise.

55. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that past evaluations of national action plans had been effective and helpful in mapping the way forward. The delegation would provide a written answer to the Committee's question regarding difficulties that migrant women experienced in obtaining legal aid.

56. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that, in a recent research study on the prevalence of female genital mutilation in European Union countries, the European Institute for Gender Equality had estimated that between 12 and 17 per cent of the 758 girls aged under 18 years old currently living in Cyprus who originated from countries where female genital mutilation was practised were at risk. However, research had also shown that communities were starting to abandon the practice as a result of efforts to promote their social inclusion. A specific provision on female genital mutilation, which contained a precise definition of the act, had been incorporated into the Criminal Code in 2003, as article 233 (a). The article specified that the act remained an offence even if the victim had given consent and the law gave Cyprus jurisdiction over such acts even if they were committed outside national territory. In line with the Istanbul Convention, Cyprus was adopting legislation that should ensure better protection for women who had been victims of violence or were at risk of female genital mutilation by providing more specialized support services. Efforts were also being made to make asylum procedures more gender-sensitive.

Articles 7 to 9

57. **Ms. Hofmeister** asked what steps the State party had taken to establish a systematic system for collecting data with which to monitor progress in implementing articles 7 and 8 of the Convention; what it was doing to support women's access to decision-making bodies and leadership positions; how it intended to prevent multiple forms of discrimination; what measures were being used to encourage women in politics; and what action had been taken to stem the marked decrease in the number of women standing for or holding political office, especially in municipal authorities. She would appreciate information about the role of the media; for example, what was the State party doing to improve the working environment for women in the public eye, particularly, in terms of preventing cybercrime, hate speech and sexual harassment? She would also like to know how the authorities planned to increase women's confidence in the court system and the police and to promote gender neutrality as a means to dismantle the prevalent patriarchal culture.

58. **Mr. Bergby**, noting the State party's assurance that problems surrounding the ratification of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons would be resolved in 2018, asked whether Cyprus also intended to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the two instruments being of equal importance. In that connection, he wished to know what the State party was doing to ensure that undocumented migrant women who gave birth in Cyprus were informed of their right to register births and obtain birth certificates for their children and to facilitate procedures for the issuance of birth certificates in such circumstances.

59. **Ms. Koursoumba** (Cyprus) said that the problems preventing ratification of the two Conventions should indeed be solved by the end of 2018. As regards the registration of births, failure to register was a criminal offence in Cyprus; accordingly, medical practitioners and clinic owners or administrators who failed to ensure that a birth was duly registered could be brought to justice. There had been reports of cases in which registration had been delayed by the clinic as a means of exerting pressure to obtain payment, and others in which undocumented migrants had been afraid to report births. The Ministry for the Interior had taken steps to remedy such situations and clinics had been informed on how to proceed in such cases.

60. **Mr. Veis** (Cyprus) said that data and information about hate speech and hate crime was available on the official website of the Cyprus Police. Between 2005 and 2017, 72 per cent of cases brought for such offences had resulted in convictions, attesting to the efficacy of domestic legislation and procedures related to hate crime. In the case of hate speech, a more measured approach, which did not necessarily involve criminal proceedings, was required in order to prevent potential violations of the right to free speech.

61. **Ms.** Niki **Andreou** (Cyprus) said that gender stereotypes were the major obstacle to equal representation of women in political and public life. Reflecting the urgent need to eliminate such traditional perceptions, the National Action Plan for Gender Equality provided for ongoing monitoring; awards for best practice in gender equality; campaigns to raise awareness of women's right to breastfeed; research into the manner in which women were portrayed in the mass media; the adoption of a mass media code of conduct; training for media professionals; an annual gender equality prize for journalists; and programmes to introduce children to the concept of gender equality at an early age.

62. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked whether article 2 (7) of the Constitution, which dictated that married women and all children under the age of 21 years should belong to the community of the husband/father, and was thus discriminatory, was still in force.

63. **Ms. Kouroumba** (Cyprus) said that the Constitution had been drafted under the London and Zurich Agreements establishing the Republic of Cyprus to take account of both the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, and that it was to those communities that the word "community" in article 2 (7) referred. The two communities had different political representatives, and it was thus important to distinguish between them. It was hoped that, once a political solution to the current situation had been found, the need to maintain that distinction would become redundant.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.